



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA
Metropolitan Planning Organization

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of October 29, 2003

1:45 p.m. Greensboro, NC

Plaza Level Conference Room

Melvin Municipal Office Building

(Greensboro City Hall)

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Carmany	TAC Chair
Jim Westmoreland	TCC Chair
Doug Galyon	NC Board of Transportation
Keith Holliday	Mayor, City of Greensboro
Don Vaughan	Greensboro City Council
Mary Rakestraw	Guilford County Board of Commissioners

ATTENDANCE

Tyler Meyer	GDOT/MPO	Bill Marley	FHWA
Jeff Sovich	GDOT/MPO	Eric Midkiff	NCDOT - PDEA
Craig McKinney	GDOT/MPO	Craig Young	NCDOT - PDEA
Scott Rhine	PART	Tom Brown	Town of Oak Ridge
Kimberly Hinton	NCDOT	Robert Gordon	Town of Summerfield
Patty Eason	NCDOT Division 7	Gregg Danzer	Town of Pleasant Garden
Carrie Reeves	GDOT	Tom Martin	Greensboro Planning Dept.
Peggy Holland	GDOT/MPO		

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 1:57 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of September 24, 2003

Don Vaughan moved for approval of the minutes. Doug Galyon seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

2. Amend Metropolitan Area Boundary

Jeff Sovich advised that MPO staff had learned earlier in the year, that the mutual boundary between the Greensboro and Burlington-Graham MPOs did not precisely match. This inconsistency resulted in both gaps and overlaps in the coverage of some portions of eastern Guilford County. For as far back as records of revisions to the Metropolitan Area Boundaries are available, there is no indication that the two MPOs have ever adopted the same boundary line for this area, despite the fact that such changes are required to be established through coordination and mutual agreement. Through discussions between MPO staff personnel, and with their respective NCDOT statewide coordinators, it was determined that the most appropriate course of action would be for the Greensboro MPO to adopt the boundary that the Burlington-Graham MPO most recently adopted, on August 20, 2002. This proposed amendment to the MAB line will eliminate the current gaps and overlaps and will improve clarity and consistency for the purposes of transportation planning authority in the area. Additionally, the proposed new boundary will not contradict the intent of the current Annexation Agreement Boundary between the City of Greensboro and the City of Burlington. In fact, the new MAB can be amended over time to reflect subsequent development and annexation activity in the area. One item of note is that the Rock Creek development area, which is entirely located within the Greensboro MAB at present, would be partially within the Burlington-Graham MAB as a result of this amendment. The recommended action is to adopt this amendment as proposed.

Keith Holliday moved to approve the amendment as presented; Don Vaughan seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the amendment to the Metropolitan Area Boundary.

3. Amend 2004 – 2010 MTIP – Program Additional SMAP Allocation

Jeff Sovich advised that the Greensboro Transit Authority was recently awarded an increase in its allocation of State Maintenance Assistance Program (SMAP) funds for fiscal year 2004. This increase reflects action by the state General Assembly, in response to a request by the NCDOT Public Transportation Division for additional funding to support the increasing costs and expanding service areas of transit operators throughout the state. The fiscal year 2004 appropriation of SMAP funding originally totaled approximately \$23 million. The General Assembly's action increased the total to roughly \$32 million. The increased SMAP allocation has been distributed among all transit operators throughout the state, based on an evaluation of their levels of need, including criteria such as passenger miles traveled, total ridership, and others. GTA's 2004 SMAP allocation has been increased by more than 40%, from \$928,876 to \$1,336,979. This increase has been put in place only for fiscal year 2004; SMAP funding will revert to lower levels in 2005, unless the General Assembly acts to extend the increase. However discussion of extending the increase will not take place until the General Assembly convenes for the short session of this legislative season. The proposed amendment to the 04-10 MTIP changes the funding assumptions for project TO 4782, Operating Assistance, which has a local share of \$4.8 million and a total cost of \$6,136,979. The recommended action is to adopt this amendment as presented.

Keith Holliday moved to approve the amendment as presented; Don Vaughan seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the amendment to the 2004 – 2010 MTIP.

Business / Potential Action Items

1. Federal MPO Certification Review Process

Jeff Sovich advised that as an MPO with an Urbanized Area population of over 200,000, Greensboro has been designated a Transportation Management Area (TMA). This status provides the MPO with a slightly higher allocation of PL funds, entitles the MPO to program STP-DA funds, and provides somewhat greater authority in the programming process. But there are also increased responsibilities that accompany this designation, such as the need for a more proactive role in project development, implementation of a Congestion Management System, and higher standards of accountability and reporting that the MPO must attain. The purpose of the federal certification review is to ensure that the MPO meets the standards and expectations of a larger Urbanized Area.

Throughout the course of the review, various MPO documents and activities will be reviewed and evaluated, including the MTIP, the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Memorandum of Understanding, and the Prospectus. A public hearing is required as part of the review process, and most likely, the review team will also observe a TAC meeting. A typical review process takes 2 or 3 days. Initially, Greensboro's first such review had been scheduled for January of 2004, but this has been rescheduled to December of 2004. This prolonged timeline allows staff extra time to ensure that everything is in order, so that the process goes smoothly. There are sanctions and corrective actions that FHWA can impose if an MPO does not pass the review, so it is in everyone's best interest to strive for a passing review.

2. Mobility Greensboro Update

This item was deferred to the November 19 TAC meeting.

3. Groometown Road Widening (U-3313)

Craig Young advised that the purpose of the Groometown Road Widening project is to improve the road's level of safety and traffic carrying capacity to meet both existing and future development in the area. The need for this project is demonstrated by the current and projected future levels of traffic congestion on Groometown Road, by an unsafe intersection alignment, and by the lack of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Groometown Road provides a major connection from I-85 to I-40 and serves a major mixed use development at the Grandover Resort. Under the no-build scenario, the projected level of service on this facility is F for both 2005 and 2025. Under the build scenario, the projected level of service is B for 2005 and B to C for 2025. The base year traffic counts were conducted in 1994, so the current traffic volumes are actually closer to the projected 2005 levels, than to the base year. It is interesting to note that the design year (2025) traffic volumes are projected to be lower than those for 2005 due to the traffic that is expected to be diverted by the completion of the Greensboro Urban Loop. It is expected however, that these lower traffic volumes on Groometown Road will only be temporary, since Groometown Road / Hilltop Road / Piedmont Parkway will serve as a parallel route for the Urban Loop.

The intersection of Groometown Road at Rose Lake Drive presents a significant safety hazard for this corridor, since it is situated with a skewed-angle alignment on a sharp curve, with poor sight distance. The proposed improvements will flatten the curve and realign the intersection to reduce the potential for collisions.

Currently there are no pedestrian or bicycle accommodations in this corridor. In response to a request by the MPO, NCDOT's proposal for improvements includes installing sidewalks along both sides of Groometown Road, through a cost-sharing arrangement between GDOT and NCDOT. The proposed improvements would also make the outside lanes 14 feet wide, providing additional width to accommodate bicycle traffic.

This project began in 1999 with scoping and preliminary studies. A citizens' informational workshop was held in September 2000, to collect input from area residents. Over the subsequent 3 years, NCDOT compiled data, conducted surveys, and prepared preliminary designs. The environmental assessment was completed in September, 2003. A design public hearing will be held at Oka T. Hester Park on November 20, from 4 to 7 pm. The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is expected to be completed by March, 2004. Right of way acquisition is scheduled to begin in September 2004 (FY 04), with the project to be let to contract in March of 2005 (FY 05). The project is expected to be completed within two years.

The Environmental Assessment consisted of thorough evaluations of the impacts of the project on community, cultural, and natural resources, including impacts of indirect or cumulative nature. Three historic properties were identified as a result of the EA process, the Pleasant Grove Baptist Cemetery, the Sedgfield Stables, and the Celia Phelps Methodist Church. The Pleasant Grove Baptist Cemetery has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a result of this study. The presence of these historic resources necessitates that we evaluate ways to avoid and minimize impacts to the properties. With regard to natural resources, no wetlands, streams, or protected species were identified in the project area.

Two alignment alternatives were developed for the project. The "best-fit" alternative would widen the existing pavement on the west side in some locations, or on the east side in others, in order to find the best way to fit the improved facility into the corridor. The "avoidance" alternative would avoid all impacts to identified historic properties. The avoidance alternative was deemed to not be prudent or feasible due to the high cost and large number of relocatees that would result. Avoiding impacts to the Celia Phelps Methodist Church would force the alignment through a large apartment building. The best-fit alternative is NCDOT's recommended alternative because it results in fewer relocatees, and causes only minor impacts to 2 historic properties.

Two typical section alternatives were developed for the project, a 4 lane divided section with 16 foot wide raised grass medians, and a 5 lane undivided section with a continuous two-way left turn lane. The recommended section is the 4 lane divided alternative because it is consistent with current NCDOT policies, it is requested and supported by the City of Greensboro, it is a safer configuration, compared to the 5 lane, and it provides enhanced aesthetic appeal.

Mayor Holliday asked whether the project included changing the segments of Groometown Road that have existing 5 lane sections to 4 lane sections. Craig Young explained that such a revision was outside the scope of the project.

4. LRTP Development Update

Tyler Meyer advised that the development of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan update was officially initiated with a TCC work session earlier that day. The first external meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 3rd in the Great Hall of the Depot, from 6:30 to 8 pm. The purpose of this meeting will be for leaders of various organizations, neighborhoods, and jurisdictions throughout the community

to hear about what the process will be, what we expect to achieve with the process, and what opportunities there will be to participate. In addition, the attendees will have an opportunity to describe their vision for the future transportation system, engage in discussion, and provide their feedback.

There will be a series of 4 public information meetings in November, which will be aimed at a much broader spectrum of the public. Tentative dates and locations are:

November 11, at the Greensboro Sportsplex
November 13, at the Central Library, or the Greensboro Depot
November 18, at Northwest High School
November 20, at Pleasant Garden Town Hall

Notification of these dates and locations, and the exact meeting times will be sent to the TAC once they are finalized. The purpose of these meetings is to find out from the general public their sense of the overall needs and their goals and objectives for the transportation system. The second round of public meetings, to be held in February 2004, will focus on detailed information about specific transportation investments and public insights into the collector streets plan and thoroughfare plan issues. The final round of public meetings, to be held in spring 2004, will involve presenting the plan that's been developed, for public review and comment.

The consultant team for this project has been conducting a random statistically valid telephone survey of MPO residents, who live outside the City of Greensboro. This survey is intended to gauge public sentiment on a broad range of transportation topics, and will be used in comparison with similar surveys conducted among City of Greensboro residents. Staff will continue to provide you with further updates at upcoming meetings as well as through other channels.

5. 2006 – 2012 MTIP Development Update

Tyler Meyer advised that staff are continuing to review the many needs that have been identified in the MPO area. A TCC work session on the priority needs list will be convened some time in the next two months. As currently envisioned, the process will involve the staff developing a draft priority needs list, to be presented to the TCC for discussion, review, and identification of any additional needs. The list would then be revised and presented to the TAC for review and feedback. Additional ideas may be developed for gathering input from the TCC and TAC, which we will bring to your attention as the process moves forward, but at the very least, there will be an update at the November MPO meetings.

Development of the priority needs list is expected to be completed in December or January, depending on how the process unfolds. There will also be an opportunity for public review and comment on the priority needs list prior to adoption. We may also consider adding an opportunity for the business community to be involved in the process, possibly through our contacts with the Chamber of Commerce.

6. US 29 Access Management Study Update

Carrie Reeves advised that the consulting firm RS&H from Charlotte has been contracted to conduct this study and provide the necessary technical analysis. The goal of this study is to improve mobility, increase safety, support adjacent land uses, and preserve the social and economic well-being of stakeholders in the corridor. The objectives of the study are to address all issues of access, connectivity, land use, geometric design, and transit service, in order to achieve a viable transportation corridor.

The project limits extend 4 miles from I-40 / I-85 to Phillips Avenue and includes 14 partial or complete interchanges. Few improvements have been made to US 29 since it was constructed in 1959. The corridor exhibits many deficiencies, including: lack of shoulders; some segments with curbs, gutters, and sidewalks installed; substandard auxiliary lanes at ramps, driveways on frontage roads, no gore areas on ramps, substandard ramp grades, on-street parking at ramp terminals, and 90 degree turns onto the highway. In addition there is a lack of adequate landscaping maintenance and debris removal in the corridor. The very nature of this corridor makes such maintenance and cleanup difficult and hazardous.

Short term projects that have been identified from this study are: consider eliminating ramps to and from residential neighborhoods; re-stripe lanes and ramps; and improve lighting and signing. Intermediate projects, to be completed within 5 years, include: improving interchanges at major cross streets; lengthen ramps and gore areas; remove existing sidewalks from the highway, and improve drainage. Potential long-term projects and study proposals, which could be implemented beyond 5 years include: initiating a full interchange study to consolidate and redesign interchanges; and evaluating right of way, environmental, and community impacts of the corridor and the current deficiencies.

There was a great turnout for the first public meetings, which were held on September 3 and 4. All the major local media sources were on hand. The meetings were very positive, the attendees made some very innovative recommendations, and were eager to identify their issues and problems. The public meeting notice for the second round, to be held November 18 and 19, will be sent out soon. At these meetings, the preliminary findings and recommendations will be presented, along with maps, functional drawings, and designs. The purpose of these meetings will be to receive public input, to be incorporated into the final recommendations.

7. MPO Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer advised that he attended the annual conference of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) in Washington, D.C. Staff and TAC members of many MPOs were in attendance, including large, mid-sized, and small MPOs. The conference was an excellent opportunity to get the perspectives of these other MPOs. We look forward to continued involvement with AMPO, since it serves as an excellent lobbying conduit representing the needs of MPOs with regard to federal policies.

Sandy Carmany advised that she attended the annual conference of the North Carolina Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (NCAMPO) in Asheville. This was an excellent conference with great interaction by NCDOT, MPO staff, transportation professionals, and various experts. Representatives of the Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) were also present and participated in the sessions. One comment that caught my attention was by Roger Sheats, who said “we degrade our air quality, we degrade our water quality, and we degrade the quality of our land, all in the name of improving quality of life.”

Tyler Meyer advised that a meeting was recently held to discuss the US 421 interchanges project, R-2612. Pleasant Garden Mayor Bill Wright, Mike Mills, Eric Midkiff, Sandy Carmany, and others were present to discuss the town’s concerns about the projects propose improvements, particularly the possibility of a grade separated interchange at Neeley Road. There was a concern about the potential extension and connection of Ridgepoint Drive to Neeley Road as one alternative of this project. There was a miscommunication that the extension and connection of Ridgepoint Drive was a certainty, and a misperception that the City of Greensboro, or the MPO was supporting this alternative. Through this meeting we were able to clear up these inaccuracies and everyone came out with an understanding of the

connectivity issues and the need for this interchange. A second meeting has been arranged to take place as the environmental study concludes. This meeting will be for the group to hear the findings and recommendations of the study. A public meeting on this project will take place early next year.

Jeff Sovich advised that the I-73 / I-74 Corridor Association has been re-established. Chairman Nelson Walker has organized a "Road Rally" meeting in Greensboro to rejuvenate support, interest, and involvement in this movement. The meeting will take place on November 12 and 13 at the downtown Marriott Hotel. The meeting's sessions include an update on recent activities, a financial report, a discussion of TEA re-authorization issues, and future directions.

Other Items

1. Board Member Report

Doug Galyon reported that construction of the Southern Urban Loop has quickened and is now on target for completion by December of 2003. On the I-40 widening project, four lanes should be open to traffic in each direction by Thanksgiving.

2. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns

Gregg Danzer advised that Mike Mills will be attending a meeting of the Pleasant Garden zoning board on November 17th to look at possible revisions to the town's development ordinance, which has been in place for 5 years. The purpose of the meeting will be to identify ways of mitigating potential impacts of future projects in Pleasant Garden.

Mayor Tom Brown of Oak Ridge inquired as to the timeline for installation of the traffic signal at the intersection of NC 150 and Linville Road. The poles for the signal have been lying on the ground alongside the road for several months. Doug Galyon recommended that he contact Mike Mills to get a firm response on that question.

Mary Rakestraw raised a concern expressed by residents in the vicinity of NC 62 in northwest Guilford County. This route is currently experiencing a high volume of traffic, especially heavy trucks, very frequently at speeds exceeding the posted limits. There is also a high rate of crashes on NC 62. A large new residential development is expected to result in even further traffic congestion. Several bridges on this route seem inadequate to handle the additional traffic volume. The nearby residents are concerned about truck traffic that has been using residential streets as shortcuts to avoid congested portions of NC 62. They want to know what can be done to prevent such cut-through traffic. Doug Galyon replied that if the trucks are on a non-specified route, and their waybills do not reflect a delivery along those streets, then they are subject to citation by the County Sheriff. These residents should contact the Sheriff's Department.

3. Regional Transportation News

Scott Rhine reported that ridership on the regional PART Express service continues to increase and public awareness continues to grow. There will be an item on the next PART board agenda regarding how Park & Ride lots will be developed in rural areas. Some possible initial locations have been identified, including parcels on US 70 near the Urban Loop, and at the Depot. PART has offered to investigate any reasonable suggested locations for P&R facilities.

4. Wrap-Up

Jim Westmoreland extended congratulations to Tom Martin on the announcement of his retirement. In his work as planning director, Tom has been a champion of regionalism and of coordination between transportation and land use planning efforts.

The TAC adjourned at 3:40 p.m.